

VERA STOKES - 2003 HONORARY SURVIVOR CHAIR

As an Iowa State University Extension Field Specialist, Vera Stokes has spent the past fifteen years educating families about nutrition and health. But in 1993, as a young mother of two boys, she came face-to-face with breast cancer and it was her turn to seek information and educational materials about this all-too-common disease.

One revelation that occurred after her diagnosis was that her family had a history of breast cancer but it had been kept silent. "During the course of my treatment and recovery, I gradually became aware that other women in my family had had cancer. No one talked about it. I didn't know what to look for, what signs may have lead to an earlier diagnosis."

Vera was home recuperating from mononucleosis when she discovered the lump under her arm. Two visits to her doctor, a mammogram and a biopsy lead to the diagnosis of stage 2-breast cancer. Nearly half of her lymph nodes were affected. Her sons were only 6 and 8 at the time. "Mononucleosis saved my life. If I hadn't been home recuperating ten years ago, I may never have discovered the lump."

Since her diagnosis, Vera has participated in almost every Komen Quad Cities Race for the Cure®. She credits the support she received from her husband Earnest, her family, and the network at the Genesis Center for Breast Health as integral to her recovery. "You do not have to face breast cancer alone. Support networks like Reach for Recovery helped me and can help you, every step of the way."

Vera Stokes has spent much of her professional life educating about a variety of health issues. Now, she is passionate about breast cancer education, encouraging women to get mammograms, perform monthly breast exams, yearly clinical exam by a physician, and know the warning signs. She participates in cancer education programs and has served on panels at United Neighbors, the Martin Luther King Center, and the Little Pink Ribbon organization.

Because of her dedication to breast cancer awareness, Stokes has been selected as the Honorary Chair for the 14th Annual Komen Quad Cities Race for the Cure®, to be held Saturday, June 14, in the John Deere Commons area of downtown Moline, Illinois. As a professional educator, Vera Stokes is eager to share her story with civic groups and service clubs in the Quad Cities.